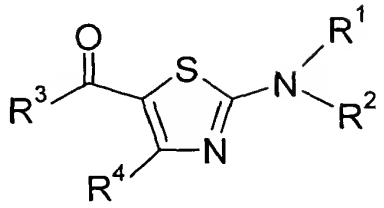
What is claimed is:

1. A compound of formula I



(I)

wherein

$R^1$ is aryl or heteroaryl, wherein at least one of the two meta positions of each aryl and heteroaryl group is substituted with $R^5$;

$R^2$ is hydrogen, alkyl or cycloalkyl;

$R^3$ is cycloalkyl, aryl or heteroaryl, wherein at least one of the two ortho positions of each cycloalkyl, aryl and heteroaryl group is substituted with $R^6$;

$R^4$ is hydrogen, alkyl or cycloalkyl;

$R^5$ is hydrogen, cyano, trifluoromethyl, alkyl-$SO_2$-, amino-$SO_2$-, halogen, alkoxy, alkylcarbonyl or aminocarbonyl;

$R^6$ is hydrogen, halogen, cyano, nitro, trifluoromethyl, alkyl, alkoxy, hydroxy or alkoxycarbonyl;

or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt or ester thereof; with the proviso that one of $R^5$ and $R^6$ is not hydrogen.

2. The compound according to claim 1, wherein $R^4$ is hydrogen or methyl.

3. The compound according to claim 1, wherein $R^2$ is hydrogen.

4. The compound according to claim 1, wherein $R^3$ is cycloalkyl which is cylohexyl, aryl which is naphthyl or phenyl, heteroaryl which is selected from pyridyl, pyrazinyl and thiophenyl, wherein at least one of the two ortho positions of each cylohexyl, naphthyl, phenyl, pyridyl, pyrazinyl and thiophenyl group is substituted with $R^6$.

5. The compound according to claim 4, wherein $R^3$ is aryl which is phenyl or heteroaryl which is pyridyl and wherein at least one of the two ortho positions of each phenyl and pyridyl group is substituted with $R^6$.

6. The compound according to claim 1, wherein $R^1$ is phenyl or pyridyl and, wherein at least one of the two meta positions of each phenyl or pyridyl group is substituted with $R^5$.

7. The compound according to claim 6, wherein $R^5$ is selected from cyano, trifluoromethyl, alkyl-$SO_2$-, amino-$SO_2$-, halogen, alkoxy, alkylcarbonyl and aminocarbonyl.

8. The compound according to claim 7, wherein $R^5$ is selected from cyano, trifluoromethyl, alkyl-$SO_2$-, amino-$SO_2$- and alkylcarbonyl.

9. The compound according to claim 8, wherein $R^5$ is selected from cyano, trifluoromethyl, methyl-$SO_2$-, $NH_2$-$SO_2$- and methylcarbonyl.

10. The compound according to claim 1, wherein $R^6$ is selected from halogen, cyano, nitro, trifluoromethyl, alkyl, alkoxy, hydroxy and alkoxycarbonyl.

11. The compound according to claim 10, wherein $R^6$ is selected from halogen, trifluoromethyl and alkyl.

12. The compound according to claim 1 selected from
3-[5-(2-Fluoro-benzoyl)-thiazol-2-ylamino]-benzonitrile;
3-[5-(2-Chloro-benzoyl)-thiazol-2-ylamino]-benzonitrile;
(2-Chloro-phenyl)-[2-(3-trifluoromethyl-phenylamino)-thiazol-5-yl]-methanone;
3-[5-(2-Methyl-benzoyl)-thiazol-2-ylamino]-benzonitrile;
o-Tolyl-[2-(3-trifluoromethyl-phenylamino)-thiazol-5-yl]-methanone;
1-{3-[5-(2-Methyl-benzoyl)-thiazol-2-ylamino]-phenyl}-ethanone;
3-[5-(2-Ethyl-benzoyl)-thiazol-2-ylamino]-benzonitrile;
3-[5-(2-Trifluoromethyl-benzoyl)-thiazol-2-ylamino]-benzonitrile;

3-[5-(3-Methyl-pyridine-2-carbonyl)-thiazol-2-ylamino]-benzonitrile;
[2-(3-Methanesulfonyl-phenylamino)-thiazol-5-yl]-o-tolyl-methanone;
(2-Ethyl-phenyl)-[2-(3-methanesulfonyl-phenylamino)-thiazol-5-yl]-methanone;
4-[5-(2-Ethyl-benzoyl)-thiazol-2-ylamino]-pyridine-2-carbonitrile;
4-[5-(2-Methyl-benzoyl)-thiazol-2-ylamino]-pyridine-2-carbonitrile;
3-[5-(2-Ethyl-benzoyl)-thiazol-2-ylamino]-benzenesulfonamide; and
3-[5-(2-Trifluoromethyl-benzoyl)-thiazol-2-ylamino]-benzenesulfonamide.

13. A pharmaceutical composition comprising a compound in accordance with claim 1 and a therapeutically inert carrier.

14. A method for the treatment or prophylaxis of obesity in a patient in need of said treatment, which comprises administering to said patient an effective amount of a compound of claim 1.

15. The method according to claim 14, wherein said compound is administered orally in an amount of from about 0.1 mg to 20 mg per kg per day.

16. The pharmaceutical composition of claim 13 further comprising a therapeutically effective amount of orlistat.